

THE MORNING NEWS

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Mary Joan Foundation unveils their 2014 agenda



Each month has a theme about living with breast cancer



Rozina Nava and Tracey Werleman

ORANJESTAD -- Due to delays at the printers, the Mary Joan Foundation 2014 agenda was launched a bit late for holiday gift giving, but it is still early in the year for those who have not yet obtained their appointment books for the year.

This very attractive agenda provides not only your week-at-a-glance, but valuable information about the foundation and its purpose: the early detection and cure of breast cancer, and support for its victims and their families.

Each month is dedicated to an important aspect of breast cancer awareness. It may be psychological or physical care while dealing with the disease and treatment, including the various programs and agencies available to islanders, aside from the work and events of the Mary Joan Foundation.

Named for Mary Joan

Geerman, who succumbed to breast cancer nearly a decade ago, the foundation honors her memory and other brave breast cancer victims who instigated the public dialog regarding the disease on Aruba. Their philosophy encouraged women to admit they had breast cancer and talk about it, seeking out contacts and not facing the ordeal alone.

The foundation was instrumental in establishing a free mammogram testing program for all island women over 40, which will be conducted out of the IBISA building in Oranjestad.

Mary Joan Board President Rozina Nava stated the foundation volunteers are very pleased with public response to their many awareness events. The foundation has 173 new members from 2013 alone, who have come forward to admit they have breast cancer, seeking and offering support.

Tracey Werleman, project manager of the 2014 Agenda, asks all to help the foundation continue their work by purchasing an agenda, of which 100% of the proceeds go to the foundation. They are available at their headquarters, attached to the ATCO offices in Dakota and at Plaza Book Shop for 25 Aruban florins (\$14. U.S.) each.

By Rosalie Klein

Tanker crash, fire kills 15 in Lagos: rescue agency

LAGOS (AFP) - Fifteen people were killed in Nigeria's financial hub Lagos when a tanker loaded with fuel overturned and burst into flames, a rescue agency said on Wednesday.

National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) spokesman Ibrahim Farinloye told AFP initially that nine people had died in the accident, which happened just before midnight (2300 GMT) on Tuesday.

"The fire service have since picked up six more bodies," he later added, taking the death toll to 15.

The assistant comptroller of the Federal Fire Service, Ganiyu Olayiwola, also confirmed 15 deaths.

"The cause of the accident was due to a brake failure as the tanker lorry was trying to manoeuvre," he added.

Four houses, four buses and more than 60 shops were destroyed by the fire, which was extinguished shortly after 1:00 am local time on Wednesday, said Farinloye.

The accident happened on the Apapa-Oshodi expressway, which links the city's international airport with the seaport, and caused long delays to traffic on the route, which is one of the city's busiest.

Relief on the way for shivering Americans



CHICAGO4 (AFP) - After days of an arctic chill so cold that a Chicago zoo brought their polar bear inside, the United States woke up to a break in the weather Wednesday.

The National Weather Service said "a much anticipated warm up" was expected over the eastern two-thirds of the United States which had shivered through a week of record-breaking cold and two massive snowstorms.

But it will still be long underwear and scarf weather for many: the weather service predicts temperatures will be 15 to 25 degrees Fahrenheit below average in parts of the upper Midwest.

And every US state except sunny Florida and tropical Hawaii were forecast to dip below freezing either during the day or overnight Wednesday.

Air travel, which had been an utter nightmare with more than 18,000 flights cancelled since Thursday, was starting to slowly return to normal.

On Wednesday morning 664 US flights had been cancelled and more than 1,000 were delayed, according to FlightAware.com, a site that monitors air travel.

The slight warming comes after some truly stunning temperatures -- in some cases lower than the surface of

Mars.

Chicago was colder than the South Pole when officials at the Lincoln Park zoo decided to keep Anana the polar bear inside on Monday. Unlike her wild cousins she hadn't built up the protective fat stores to insulate herself against the chill.

It was so cold in Kentucky that an escaped inmate begged to be let back into prison so he could warm up after spending the night shivering in an abandoned house, officials told AFP.

And more than 500 passengers spent the night aboard trains stranded by snow drifts in Illinois.

The most dangerous cold -- cold that can cause frostbite in minutes and death in a matter of hours -- hit the Midwest, as a weather phenomenon called the 'polar vortex' brought frigid air from the Arctic.

Schools, businesses and government offices were closed. Water mains and household pipes froze. Airplanes were grounded, trains were halted and roads and sidewalks became ice rinks. The National Guard was called in to help rescue hundreds of stranded motorists.

Continued on pg 6



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Loyal Visitors honored at the Casa Del Mar Beach Resort



Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a very nice family whom are loyal and friendly Visitors of Aruba, at the Casa Del Mar as Distinguished Visitors and Ambassadors of Goodwill. The symbolic honorary titles are presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10 to 19 and 20 or more consecutive years.

The honorees were Mr. Nathan and Mrs. Marla

Krypell and daughter Loren Moslin. The honorees are loyal members of the Casa Del Mar and they love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restaurants, and being on Aruba and staying at the Casa Del Mar is like being home for them. The certificates were presented by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Ms. Nohely Cannegiter representing the Casa Del Mar Beach Resort.

Jack and Kathleen Nappi honored at the Paradise Beach Villas

Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a very special couple whom are loyal and friendly Visitors of Aruba, at the Paradise Beach Villas as Ambassadors of Goodwill. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 20 or more consecutive years.

The honorees were Mr. Jack and Mrs. Kathleen Nappi from San Antonio FLA. The honorees are loyal members of the Paradise Beach Villas and they love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the cli-



mate, beaches, restaurants, and being on Aruba and staying at the Paradise is like being home for them. The certificates were presented

by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Mr. Ismael Valdez representing the Paradise Beach Villas.

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GENERATION Z; The unstoppable rise of a digital generation

Aruban business people were fortunate to be treated to a talk by "international marketing maven extraordinaire" René Boender some years past, hosted by the RBC Bank (then RBTT) for their clients. His presentation was as stimulating and creative as the legendary marketing campaigns that built his reputation. He is cited as being "this generation's advocate of creative thinking in marketing and advertising, and a well-versed advisor to the world's top companies of how to make the most of the tools that are now available."

Mr. Boender was kind enough to share his current thoughts on stimulating commerce with the current digitally driven generation with THE MORNING NEWS. The article is quite thorough, and will be printed in installments over the next week.

Part I:

Although it is difficult to give an exact time and date, the Internet emerged as a widespread social phenomenon around 1995. It signalled the start of a digital revolution. Older generations have adjusted to the new reality with varying degrees of resistance and difficulty, but children born from that moment onward have never known a world other than one in which the web plays a prominent, defining role.

This generation is growing up in a digital world where technological revolutions are an everyday occurrence. A generation that is online constantly and everywhere, a generation for whom social media is not a discovery, but

René C.W. Boender Brain-agent & author "Great to Cool & Cool is Hot"

a necessity. These "children of the web" will enter the workforce sometime around 2020. This is a good incentive for all people around the globe to take a moment and examine these digital kids in detail. Who are they? What do they expect from the world? What will they demand? How will Generation X offer this Generation Z guidance? And most importantly, how will they change the workplace?

Based on extensive literature research by Dr. Jos Ahlers (both offline and online, of course), the insights of René C. W. Boender, Brain Agent and Trendteller, and a series of 24 interviews with members of Generation Z, we offer an impression of a generation currently growing up and who will enter dominate the workplace from 2020 onward.

This is Generation Z.

The generations

Babyboomers were the first generation in history to give themselves a name. A fitting move for a generation (born roughly between 1946 and 1964) that grew up in a time of economic recovery, technological advancement and social progress. In some literature, the Babyboomer generation is referred to as the "me generation." A spoiled generation, with slightly narcissistic tendencies. But it is also the genera-



René Boender

tion that has been the driving force behind rapid economic and social developments from the 1960s onward. Those who fall into the Babyboomer generation age bracket enjoyed an ever-growing amount of rights (and arguably an ever-shrinking number of obligations) while they were growing up, which justified a special moniker.

In the meantime, there has been a mad scramble to choose a suitable name for every subsequent generation. After the Babyboomers came Generation X. The name was inspired by the novel by Douglas Coupland (Generation X: Tales for an accelerated culture, published in 1991). Generation X-ers were born between 1965 and 1979. Many opine that this is a "lost generation" that never managed to emerge from the shadow of the Babyboomers. Having come of age during a period of economic stagnation and high unemployment

levels for young people, this generation had very few ideals left to fight for. After all, the Babyboomers had already done that.

The creative zest for naming fizzled and Generation X gave way to Generation Y. Incidentally, this lacklustre effort illustrates what the Babyboomers had claimed all along; namely, that Generation X was completely void of inspiration and spoiled by material affluence. Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1995) has been dubbed a series of different names, none of which has managed to stick: Millennium generation (because they were the first generation to come of age in the 21st century), Generation Next, Net Generation, Echo Boomers and Peter Pan

Generation. A salient detail is that this generation either grew up or is growing up in the wake of 9 September 2001. As the post-9/11 generation, theirs is a world in which the threat of large-scale violence is rising after having declined for a number of decades.

Generation Y grew up with the Internet, mobile phones and email, but can still remember a world without these. They have never witnessed protracted economic setbacks and despite the increased threat of terrorist acts, this generation has been led to believe that "everything is possible" and "anything goes."

Tomorrow: Defining Generation Z



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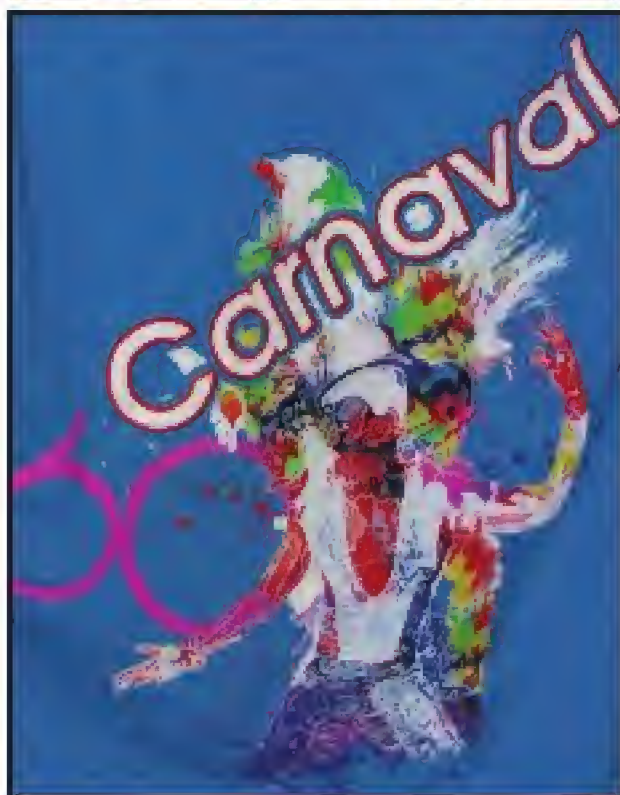


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SETAR unveils its Carnival 60 jingle, T-shirt and gadgets!



ORANJESTAD -- Last Monday night, during

TeleAruba's TV program "Den Dje," SETAR launched its Carnival 60 jingle, T-shirt and gadgets. The various items dedicated to the Golden Jubilee Carnival were unveiled during the program broadcasted live from Setar's main office in Seroe Blanco.

Setar Marketing Manager Shahaira Labad presented the official SETAR T-shirt to SAC President Mrs. Tecla Kelly-Hernandez. The T-shirt is the same blue color of our

design, by Urvin Robert, represents a man with his body piece and the word Carnival 60. His left arm is lifted, representing Carnival past. His forehead indicates the future of our Carnival. The colors show how vibrant and explosive it is.

On that same night, the Marketing & Corporate team presented SETAR's Carnival 60 jingle, which was performed by Youth Extreme band and Kuenta I Tambu.

SETAR reminds all televiewers there will be a special Pay Per View Early Bird offer, enabling subscribers to enjoy the music and spectacle of the Caiso & Soca Monarch Festival from the comfort of their living rooms. Call tel. 525-1700 or go personally to any teleshops to subscribe for the special price of Afls. 35; the offer expires January 17. Invite dozens of family and friends for your own Caiso and Soca house party!

During the TV launch, the Aruba Musicians representative, Hildward Croes, explained the preparations by the musicians in making this Caiso & Soca Monarch 2014 one of the most memorable ever.

Marketing Department executive Juliska Henriquez handed out a commemorative SETAR prepaid phone cards valued at Afls. 15 with a special Carnival 60 motif during the program. Receiving it on behalf of SAC volunteers was SAC representative Rene Ridderstap. The card has the same design as the T-shirt.



Lunch Buffet

Saturday - Sunday
12:00 - 3 p.m.

Dinner

Monday - Sunday
6:00 - 11:00 p.m.

Palm Beach Center - Palm Beach Aruba - Tel: 5860944

Bunny ready to welcome friends and family members

SAN NICOALS -- We would like to introduce Bunny to you, one of the donkeys that has found a home at the Aruba Donkey Sanctuary. Together with her son Maestro she was roaming the island and that is a hazardous occupation. Lots of traffic and wild dogs make life very difficult for a roaming donkey. It took quite a few tries, but finally our volunteers succeeded in capturing the two donkeys by luring them into a garden at Rooi Master.

Bunny was named Bunny because of the fact that she was caught around Easter; Maestro refers to Master, as in Rooi Master. But Bunny had a treat for us: two weeks after being caught she delivered a baby boy, whom we baptized Amadeus. So here we are proudly presenting Bunny, Maestro and Amadeus, a great little donkey family.

This beautiful donkey has been provided with a chip, just like all the other donkeys. On the chip is information about the donkey and its medical history. The donkeys at the sanctuary have a lot of friends with whom they can play all day long. And they love living there: they are well-cared for, they are fed and watered and when they are sick the vet is called. Yes, they are expensive customers for the sanctuary.

The volunteers are trying to cover the various costs with all kinds of activities and the sale of great donkey memorabilia in the shop. Fortunately, there are also visitors who wish to adopt a donkey, who buy something at the donkey shop or who



make a donation. Thus they help support us. Everyone is welcome to visit the sanctuary, which has opening hours from 9 am until 4 pm and in the weekend from 10 am until 3. Entry is free of charge and one can enjoy a soft drink, a cup of coffee or a refreshing ice cream.

The volunteers of the sanctuary are hoping that somebody will adopt this friendly, lovely donkey. Of course the donkey will keep on living at the sanctuary; you only need to pay AWG. 30,- per month for the donkey's keep. With this amount you help support the sanctuary as well as your own donkey. And you will receive a beautiful certificate and a super T-shirt and your name and photo will be posted on our website. So please call the sanctuary at 593-2933; you can also register via the website www.arubandonkey.org or donate money on bank account number 40.03.025 at the Aruba Bank! Just do it! Would you like to follow the donkeys on Facebook: surf to Donkey Sanctuary Aruba please.



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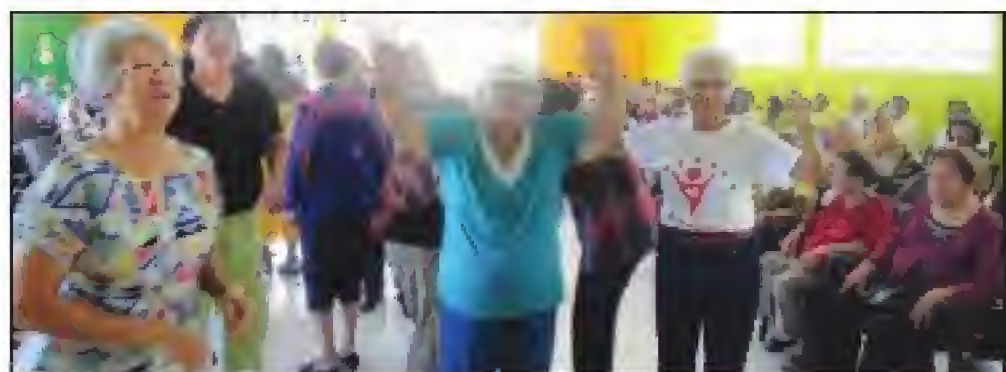


ORANJESTAD -- The Kibrahacha Club 60+ celebrated the past holidays in a tremendous atmosphere. They went to the Westin Hotel for their traditional Christmas celebration. More than 200 members of the Club spent a few hours sim-

Club opened the year with their traditional Dande. This was especially enjoyed by all. They also enjoyed the usual "oliebollen." It was, indeed, a very enjoyable and festive morning.

Club Kibrahacha is grateful to all their members who have placed their confidence in the Club and who contribute in different ways. Club Kibrahacha will continue working on the behalf of their members and all 60+ers of Aruba.

Club Kibrahacha is a social club with the goal of helping their members maintain a healthy body and mind. Every day they offer different activities such as: Dance Fit, Chi cu Cha, Energie training, Yoga, Smovey and much



ply enjoying themselves. Along with the traditional food, dancing and singing, they also took time to consider the primary reason for Christmas, namely, the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Club is grateful to all who made the festive morning such a whopping success. They were especially grateful to the EPI students who contributed and helped so wonderfully with the festive morning.

On the 6th of January the

more. They also have an Internet Cafe with WiFi where members can take computer lessons. In the event they don't have transportation, the Club offers this service as well.

This is a good time to become a member of the Club and enjoy all that they have to offer. Please call them at 582-8159 to register or for information, or visit them personally at Piedra Plat 23. Visit their website or become a friend on Facebook.

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Aruba Tax Department Increases service hours for payment and distribution of 2014 number plates

ORANJESTAD -- The Aruba Tax Department announces it is increasing its service hours during this busy season. The cash register and the department that hands over the 2014 number plates will stay open during lunch hours. This is also the case for the auxiliary offices in the various districts of Aruba.

The Tax Department also announces that its offices will also open on Saturdays, beginning this Saturday, January 11, until February 15. This to facilitate client's payment of motor vehicle tax and/or other taxes and collection of number plates

The opening hours are as follows:

| Service | Site | Service hours |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Cash Register | Main office at Camacuri | From Monday to Friday 7:45 am - 3:30 pm non-stop From: January 6 to February 14, 2014 On Saturday: 8:00 am - 2:00 pm non-stop From: January 11 until February 15, 2014 |
| Cash Register | Government offices at San Nicolas, Savaneta, Santa Cruz and Paradera | From Monday to Friday: 8:30 am - 2:45 pm non-stop From: January 6 until February 14, 2014 |
| Handing over of number plates | Number plates office at Camacuri | From Monday to Friday: 7:45 am - 3:30 pm non-stop From: January 6 to February 14, 2014 On Saturday: 8:00 am - 2:00 pm non-stop From: January 11 until February 15, 2014 |

The Aruba Tax Department hopes, with these extra hours, to help as much clients as possible and expedite the distribution of the 2014 license plates.

Relief on the way for shivering Americans

Cont. from pg 1

There were reports of at least 20 deaths caused by the extreme weather. Many were from traffic accidents, but four women were found dead in the snow, including an elderly woman with Alzheimer's disease in New York and a young woman found outside her home in Minnesota.

Hypothermia was blamed for the death of a man in Wisconsin and contributed to a death in Ohio. And at least four men suffered heart attacks while shoveling snow in Chicago.

The town of Embarrass, Minnesota, recorded the lowest temperature in the United States Tuesday at a frigid -37 Celsius (-35 Fahrenheit). It had warmed up to -25 Celsius (-13 Fahrenheit) on Wednesday morning.

Then there was the wind chill: a calculation that represents how much colder it feels when the blinding gusts hit you in the face.

That dipped as low as -52 Celsius (-61 Fahrenheit) in Montana and was in the -40 to -50 Celsius (-40 to -58 Fahrenheit) range in parts of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin on Monday and Tuesday.

That's cold enough to toss a cup of boiling water into the air and watch it turn into snow before it hits the ground.

Obama invites Merkel to Washington after phone-tap row

WASHINGTON (AFP) - US President Barack Obama on Wednesday invited German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Washington in an effort to mend fences after a diplomatic crisis provoked by revelations of US eavesdropping on her mobile phone.

Obama called Merkel to wish her a speedy recovery after her recent skiing injury and invited her to visit at a "mutually agreeable time in the coming months," the White House said in a statement.

Merkel reacted furiously last year to revelations that the National Security Agency had been listening in on her mobile phone calls, telling Obama in an October telephone call that such action would be a "breach of trust" between two allies.

The reports in US and European media outlets, sourced from documents leaked by

The Mars Rover has been sending back daily temperature readings from its tour of the Red Planet ranging from -25 to -31 degrees Celsius (-13 and -24 degrees Fahrenheit).

"To be fair, though, Mars is still way colder," the Smithsonian Institute wrote in a blog post. "The Curiosity rover is driving around in a crater at, roughly, the equivalent latitude of Venezuela."

But then again, Mars is 78 million miles further away from the Sun.

Even hardy Canadians were complaining of the cold amid widespread power outages.

Temperatures as low as minus 50 degrees Celsius (minus 58 Fahrenheit) with a wind chill plunged the western Prairies region into a deep freeze.

The streets of Toronto, Montreal and the capital Ottawa were coated with black ice after unusually warm temperatures brought rain Monday before the mercury plunged overnight.

Toronto's Pearson Airport temporarily halted ground operations early Tuesday because of "equipment freezing" and out of concern for the safety of airport personnel, it said on its Twitter account. A quarter of its flights were cancelled on Wednesday morning.

fugitive intelligence contractor Edward Snowden, damaged US relations with key allies and were a political and personal embarrassment for Obama.

Washington never confirmed that the eavesdropping had taken place, but implicitly confirmed reports by the careful formulation of its response to questions from reporters.

The White House said that US spies were not currently monitoring Merkel's phone and would not do so in the future, but would not comment on past surveillance activity.

The invitation to Merkel comes as the White House tries to draw a line under the Snowden issue, with Obama poised to give a speech to Americans this month detailing how the NSA's massive phone and data collection activities will be reformed.

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Dutch pension fund quits Israeli banks over settlements

THE HAGUE (AFP) - Dutch pension asset manager PGGM, one of the largest in the country, said on Wednesday it was divesting from five Israeli banks because they finance Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The announcement comes a month after a major Dutch water supplier ended a partnership with an Israeli water company which supplies Israeli towns and Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank.

"PGGM recently decided to no longer invest in five Israeli banks," said the company, which manages about 153 billion euros (\$208 bn) in funds.

"The reason for this was their involvement in financing Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian

territories," PGGM said in a statement.

PGGM said there was "a concern, as the settlements in the Palestinian territories are considered illegal under humanitarian law," and regarded by international observers as an "important obstacle to a peaceful (two-state) solution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict."

It said it would no longer do business with the Hapoalim and Leumi banks, the First National Bank of Israel, the Israel Discount Bank and the Mizrahi Tefahot Bank.

PGGM added it based its decision on a 2004 UN International Court of Justice ruling that the Jewish settlements were in breach of the Geneva Convention relating to occupying powers

transferring their own citizens into occupied territories.

The group said it had been discussing the issue with the Israeli banks "for several years" but that the banks "have limited to no possibilities to end their involvement in the financing of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories."

"Therefore, it was concluded that engagement as a tool to bring about change will not be effective in this case," PGGM said.

All investment in the banks ended on January 1 "as concerns remain and changes are not expected in the foreseeable future," it added.

PGGM's investments in Israeli banks amount to a few tens of millions of euros, Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported.

Pope's Mideast visit has 'political dimension': cleric



VATICAN CITY (AFP) - Pope Francis's visit to the Middle East in May will inevitably have a "political dimension" and there are high expectations also among the Muslim population, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem said on Wednesday.

Fouad Twal said in an interview with I.Media, a news agency specialised in Vatican affairs, that he hoped the visit would also help develop closer relations between local Catholic and Orthodox communities.

"Of course the visit will have a political dimension because this dimension is our oxygen," Twal said.

Francis on Sunday announced he will travel to Amman, Bethlehem and Jerusalem on May 24-26.

Twal said that during his stay in Jordan, Francis would dine with Syrian refugees, poor and handicapped people in the same spot where Jesus Christ is believed to have been baptised on the banks of the River Jordan.

In Bethlehem, he would celebrate a mass and have a meal with local families. In Jerusalem, Twal said the pope would likely visit the Western Wall (Wailing Wall) and possibly the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum.

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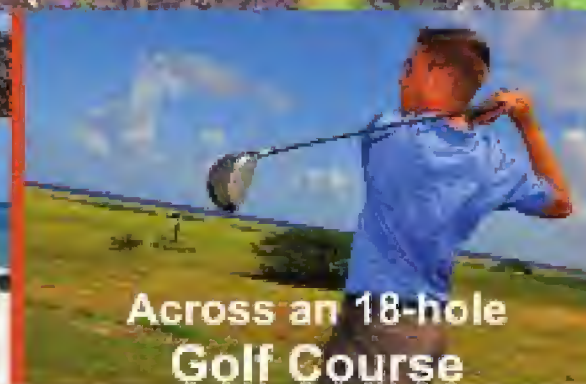
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Spain press says royal fraud case shows law same for all

MADRID (AFP) - Spain's press Wednesday hailed the news that King Juan Carlos' youngest daughter has been declared a financial fraud suspect as evidence that all are equal under the law.

Newspapers devoted front pages and reams of ink inside to a Majorca judge's decision to summon Princess Cristina, 48, as a suspect in tax and money-laundering crimes linked to the activities of her husband, former Olympic

handball player Inaki Urdangarin.

The judge, Jose Castro, had summoned the princess once before, in April 2013, only to have his decision overturned on an appeal by the prosecutor, sparking accusations in some media of favouritism.

This time, the summons ran to 227 detailed pages and commentators seemed to agree that it would survive any appeal, meaning that a direct relative of the Spanish king would ap-

pear in court as a suspect for the first time in modern history.

The judge in the Majorca court has been investigating allegations that Urdangarin and a former business partner embezzled six million euros (\$8 million) in public funds via the Noos Institute, a charitable foundation that he chaired.

The blonde-haired Cristina was a member of the board of Noos and with her husband jointly owned another com-

pany, Aizoon, which investigators suspect served as a front for laundering embezzled funds.

Right-leaning daily El Mundo said the latest turn in the case showed that Cristina should have agreed to appear when the judge first tried to summon her on suspicion of abusing her royal position for financial benefit.

Among those joining the strategy, El Mundo said, were the prosecutor, defence

lawyers, the tax authorities, the royal household and the media, "which hypocritically applaud the king for defending justice that is 'equal for all' while at the same time showing support for burying activities of the princess that are worthy of judicial investigation".

'Princess should not get special treatment'

The pro-monarchy ABC, however, protested that the media had already started its own trial.

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More smokers worldwide than in 1980: study

WASHINGTON (AFP) - More people smoke worldwide today than in 1980, as population growth surges and cigarettes gain popularity in countries such as China, India and Russia, researchers said Tuesday.

For instance, China boasted nearly 100 million more smokers in 2012 than it had three decades ago, even though its smoking rate fell from 30 to 24 percent in that span, said the findings in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The rise in the number of smokers comes despite overall declines in the smoking rate in recent decades, as many people have realized the health dangers of tobacco, said the report.

The data was published as part of a series of tobacco-related articles to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the first US Surgeon General's report on the risks of smoking.



"Since we know that half of all smokers will eventually be killed by tobacco, greater numbers of smokers will mean a massive increase in premature deaths in our lifetime," said co-author Alan Lopez of the University of Melbourne.

The study, led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, measured data from 187 countries.

It found that the global smoking rate among men was 41 percent in 1980, but has

since declined to an average of 31 percent.

Among women, the estimated prevalence of daily tobacco smoking was 10.6 percent in 1980, and by 2012 that had fallen to 6.2 percent.

The most rapid decrease began in the mid-1990s, but smoking has actually risen again among men since 2010, said the findings.

China had 182 million smokers in 1980, and nearly 282 million in 2012, it said.

India gained 35 million smokers -- bringing its total to 110 million -- even though the smoking rate fell from 19 to 13 percent of the population.

Russia, where about one third of people smoke, has added one million smokers since 1980.

Globally, the number of smokers has climbed from 721 million in 1980 to 967 million in 2012.

The number of cigarettes smoked annually has also risen 26 percent over the past three decades.

"The greatest health risks are likely to occur in countries with high prevalence and high consumption," said the study.

Those countries include China, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Korea, the Philippines, Uruguay, Switzerland and Russia, it said.

The US smoking rate went from 30.6 percent in 1980 to 15.8 percent in 2012. Similar trends were seen in Australia.

Over 1,000 ill as Japan tainted food scandal widens: report

TOKYO (AFP) - More than 1,000 people have fallen ill after eating pesticide-contaminated frozen food as a scandal widens across Japan, Jiji Press reported Wednesday.

People have reported vomiting, diarrhoea and other symptoms of food poisoning after eating products including pizza and lasagne made by a subsidiary of Maruha Nichiro Holdings, the nation's largest seafood firm.

The number of people affected by the tainted food has now risen to over 1,000, with more than 200 taken ill in the northern main island of Hokkaido alone, Jiji said.

In western Osaka prefecture, a nine-month-old baby was hospitalised with vomiting on Monday after eating a product called creamy corn croquettes, the report said.

Police began investigating the company last month after it revealed some of its frozen food had been tainted with malathion, an agricultural chemical often used to kill aphids in corn and rice fields.

Detectives are looking at the possibility that the pesticide was deliberately added to

the food at some stage of production at a factory in Gunma, north of Tokyo, Jiji said.

As of Wednesday, Maruha Nichiro has received about 630,000 phone calls from consumers in connection with the incident, including complaints from customers who had eaten tainted products and some reporting unusual odours, a company spokeswoman said.

The food maker has recalled 6.4 million potentially tainted products, with 1.49 million packages recovered so far, she said. None of the products in question had been shipped overseas, the company said.

While food scares do happen in Japan -- in August 2012 E. coli-riddled cabbage killed seven people and sickened dozens -- standards are relatively high.

However, a much-vaunted reputation for safe and high quality food has been badly affected by the Fukushima atomic disaster, which saw acres of farmland polluted by nuclear fall-out and many countries restrict agricultural imports from the area.

NY governor authorizes medical marijuana



NEW YORK (AFP) - New York governor Andrew Cuomo announced Wednesday he is authorizing the use of marijuana for medical purposes, making New York the 21st US state to do so. "We will establish a program allowing up to 20 hospitals to prescribe medical marijuana, and we will monitor the program to evaluate effectiveness in the feasibility of medical marijuana system," he said.

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Adele's '21' passes 3 million US digital sales

NEW YORK (AFP) - The album "21" by British singer Adele has become the first to pass three million digital sales in the United States, the leading online tracking company Nielsen said Wednesday.

Three years after its release, the album, Adele's second record, continues to have robust sales and so far has shifted 26 million copies worldwide.

A Nielsen spokeswoman confirmed "21" had passed three million digital sales in America, building on its top-selling global status in 2011 and 2012, on the back of the singles "Rolling in the deep" and "Someone like you."

The 25-year-old singer enjoyed an outstanding 2013, winning the best original song Oscar for the 007 movie theme tune "Skyfall," at the 85th Academy Awards.

In 2012, "21" won six Grammy awards, though the singer has experienced some problems with her voice in the past year. According to Rolling Stone, the London-born artist is currently working on a new album.



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'Gravity' and '12 Years a Slave' lead Bafta race



LONDON (AFP) - Space drama "Gravity" received 11 Bafta nominations on Wednesday, one more than the hotly-tipped "12 Years a Slave" as Britain's equivalent awards pointed the way to Oscars glory.

"Gravity" star Sandra Bullock was nominated for best actress, while Mexico's Alfonso Cuarón is in the running for best director.

The nominations offered further indications of the strong Oscar chances of "12 Years a Slave", whose British filmmaker Steve McQueen was named in the best director category.

The film's star Chiwetel Ejiofor, who plays a free black man who is kidnapped and forced into slavery, was nominated for the leading actor gong, while Michael Fassbender and rising Kenyan actress Lupita Nyong'o received nods

for their supporting roles.

"American Hustle", a drama about two con artists embroiled with the FBI in the 1970s, equalled the ten Bafta nominations for "12 Years a Slave".

"Hustle" star Christian Bale will go up against Ejiofor, Tom Hanks for "Captain Phillips", Bruce Dern for "Nebraska" and Leonardo DiCaprio for "The Wolf of Wall Street" in the best leading man category.

Bookmakers immediately installed Ejiofor as favourite to win best leading man with odds of 1-4, while they made "12 Years a Slave" favourite for the best film award.

Ejiofor, who was raised in London, said: "I continue to be immensely proud of the recognition this film is getting around the world. There is, of course, something particularly special about receiving a Bafta

nomination from home."

Last year, Iran hostage drama "Argo" took the Bafta for best film before scooping the best-picture Oscar.

In the leading actress category, Bullock will challenge "American Hustle" star Amy Adams, Cate Blanchett for "Blue Jasmine", Emma Thompson for "Saving Mr Banks" and Judi Dench for "Philomena".

"Captain Phillips" and "Philomena" -- based on a true story about the Catholic Church in Ireland selling babies to wealthy Americans in the 1950s -- complete the five-strong list of contenders for best film.

Steve Coogan, who stars alongside Dench in "Philomena" and co-wrote the film, said it had been "a labour of love".

US chat show host Oprah Winfrey was nominated for best supporting actress for her role in "The Butler".

That category also sees Nyong'o, Jennifer Lawrence ("American Hustle") and Julia Roberts ("Osage County") nominated along with Sally Hawkins for her role in Woody Allen's "Blue Jasmine".

The Bafta awards ceremony takes place at the Royal Opera House in London on February 16, two weeks before the Oscars.

Iran filming marred when 'TNT blast' kills 5 crew

TEHRAN (AFP) - An accidental blast killed five special effects crew of an Iranian film when real-life explosives detonated as they were being delivered to the set Wednesday, media reported.

Two other crew were hurt in the explosion, in a car transporting the material to the set, some 30 kilometres (18 miles) southwest of Tehran, the ISNA news agency reported.

The Mehr news agency said the explosives were TNT.

A member of the movie industry's special effects union, Abbas Shoghi, criticised authorities for banning the import of specialised material.

"We are forced to use real-life explosives for a movie shoot because security authorities do not allow the import of props that are used in movies," Shoghi told ISNA.

The movie, called "Mer-ajilha" ("Ascensionists"), is a war film built around a story of soldiers going to heaven after they are killed. It is being directed by Masoud Dehnamaki, known for his controversial "Outcasts" trilogy.

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Twitter co-founder launches app for asking about what you see



SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) - Twitter co-founder Biz Stone on Tuesday took the wraps off a smartphone application that invites people to tap into their online social networks for answers about things they see.

Jelly, available free for Apple gadgets or mobile devices powered by Google-backed Android software, let people reach out virtually to friends, or friends of friends, when interested in finding out more about where one is or what is happening around them at a given moment.

"Say you're walking along and you spot something unusual," said a blog post at the Jelly website. "You want to know what it is so you launch Jelly, take a picture, circle it with your finger, and type 'What's this?'"

Jelly queries are submitted to friends who also have the application, and notifications

pop-up when answers are provided.

Jelly meshes with people's existing social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Facebook last year modified its search features to allow members to tap into the social network's public data for answers to general questions such as "What kinds of films do Republicans like?" but Jelly promises to provide insights to what is around a person at any time.

Online forums at services such as Quora and Reddit let people delve into broad issues and topics, with Jelly again distinguishing itself by dealing with queries relevant to real-time moments in life.

Jelly also saw it as an advantage to let people ask questions with pictures.

"In a world where 140 characters is considered a maximum length, a picture really is worth a thousand words," Jelly said in its launch blog post.

San Francisco-based Jelly was co-founded by Stone, one of the creators behind globally popular one-to-many text messaging service Twitter, which made a blockbuster stock market debut last year.

Stone fired off word of the Jelly launch at his @biz Twitter account.

Going digital hurting newspapers: industry spokesman

MONTREAL (AFP) - Going digital is what's hurting Canadian newspapers, not a lack of revenues or readers, which are both up, a publishing industry spokesman said Tuesday.

"Newspapers don't have an audience problem," John Hinds, president and chief executive of industry association Newspapers Canada, told the Vancouver Sun.

"There's a big fallacy out there. We have a revenue problem as we transition to cross-platform materials -- how do we pay for those? Our audiences are bigger than ever and actually growing."

The comments come after Glacier Media this week announced the closure of the Kamloops Daily News after 80 years, citing insufficient cost-cutting.

Hinds noted that advertising revenues dipped along with the economy, but have rebounded.

According to NADbank, which measures circulation, half of Canadians read a printed newspaper every day.

And three-quarters read a printed newspaper at least once a week.

These figures remained steady while online news readership has grown in recent years.

Yet last year, four Canadian dailies switched to weekly publication and the free daily



24 Hours stopped publishing in Ottawa, Edmonton and Calgary.

Canada's largest newspaper publisher, Sun Media, also eliminated more than 1,000 jobs at its newspapers nationwide as part of a restructuring to meet "unprecedented changes in the print media industry driven largely by the digital revolution," it said.

A union representing Sun

workers accused the company of diverting healthy newspaper profits to its "laughably bad" start-up television network Sun TV.

"All the newspaper companies are struggling because the world has changed, consumers have changed, technology has changed, but you have readers," NADbank's president Anne Crassweller told the Sun.

"Isn't that the bottom line? The audience is there."

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Germany to probe welfare fraud by immigrants

BERLIN (AFP) - The German government said Wednesday it will look into toughening measures against abuse of its welfare system by immigrants in light of fears of an influx from poor EU member states Romania and Bulgaria.

Chancellor Angela Merkel led a cabinet meeting of her new "grand coalition" where the government agreed to task a commission with making recommendations by mid-June.

The announcement came amid a fierce debate in Europe over the potential impact of the lifting of work restrictions for immigrants from Romania and Bulgaria from January 1.

Some of Merkel's conservative allies have recently seized on anxiety over a potential mass invasion of needy newcomers seeking to benefit from the country's relatively generous social welfare system.

As the discussion gathered steam, Merkel and her Social Democrat partners in government agreed to weigh whether to take action to curb so-called "benefits tourism".

Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007, becoming the bloc's poorest members.

Wary of an inundation from the two countries, some EU

members kept their job markets closed to Romanian and Bulgarian citizens for several years until this month.

Weeks before the expiration, Britain rushed through measures to require new EU migrants wait for three months before applying for unemployment payments and other benefits.

The German government's announcement came as the federal statistics office Destatis said the country had seen a boost to its population last year due to the biggest influx of immigrants in two decades, mainly from Europe's crisis-hit countries.

The figures showed that the number of people living in Germany had surged to 80.8 million in 2013 from 80.5 million -- the third annual increase in a row.

"Once again, the high level of positive net immigration offset a lack of births," Destatis said in a statement.

It said that the difference between the number of newcomers and those leaving the country was believed to have surpassed 400,000 for the first time in 20 years, due in large part to heavy immigration from the ailing economies of southern and eastern Europe.

In 1993, the figure had reached 462,000.

The number of births in Germany tallied between 675,000 and 695,000 while the number of deaths reached between 885,000 and 905,000, according to the provisional official figures.

Without immigration, the population would have shrunk by more than 200,000.

Merkel has called Germany's rapidly ageing population and low birthrate the biggest long-term challenge facing the country, and acknowledged that more immigration will be crucial to keep Europe's biggest economy humming.

US business urges policies, reforms to boost growth

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The US Chamber of Commerce, the leading business lobby, unveiled its 2014 agenda Wednesday calling for policies and reforms to drive stronger growth in the nation's economy.

Tom Donohue, the Chamber's president and chief executive, said that although the economy is recovering from the Great Recession, the upturn in the past four years has been patchy.

He noted 21 million Americans are unemployed, underemployed or have given up looking for work, and income growth for the middle class has underperformed.

Donohue said the slow recovery was in part due to "misguided government policies."

"We must fix these mistakes and not repeat them going forward," said Donohue, according to the text of a speech unveiling the Chamber's jobs, growth, and opportunity agenda. "Our nation's best days are not over, they are still yet to come," he said.

"No other country, no other people, no other society starts from such a position of strength and advantage as we do."

The world's largest economy probably grew in 2013 at a pace between just 1.8 percent and 2.0 percent, he said.

"This year we have an opportunity to turn the page," he said. "We should do considerably better this year -- with growth accelerating to near 3.0 percent."

Donohue highlighted challenges to economic growth, such as President Barack Obama's landmark health-care reform, dubbed Obamacare, which he said was costing jobs; "regulatory overreach"; and concerns about slow growth in Europe, the United States' largest trading partner.

"Our plan includes ideas to expand trade, produce more domestic energy, and improve our infrastructure -- which together would create millions of good-paying jobs. We'll push for government reform to modernize a regulatory process that hasn't been updated since Harry Truman was

president" in the early 1950s, he said.

The Chamber's pro-business priorities include fixing flaws in Obamacare, protecting intellectual property, improving education and training, and adjusting social safety net entitlement programs that are piling up public debt.

The Chamber "will pull out all the stops" to get immigration reform enacted this year, he vowed.

He reiterated a call for the Obama administration to approve immediately the Keystone XL Pipeline project, which would be built through environmentally sensitive areas in the state of Nebraska, saying it will create jobs.

Noting that 2014 includes the national mid-term elections for Congress in November, Donohue said the Chamber would support candidates "who want to work within the legislative process to solve the nation's problems -- and who understand that business is not the problem, business is a big part of the solution."

France fines Google maximum penalty in data privacy row

PARIS (AFP) - France's data protection watchdog on Wednesday fined Google 150,000 euros (\$205,000) -- the maximum possible -- for failing to comply with its privacy guidelines for personal data.

The fine, though tiny for a group that made \$15 billion in one quarter last year, is the regulator's biggest ever and follows in the wake of other European nations cracking down on Google's increasingly controversial privacy policies.

The watchdog, the CNIL, also ordered the US Internet giant to publish a statement relating to its decision on its French homepage for at least 48 hours within the next eight days.

Google was informed of the decision on January 3, the CNIL said in a statement.

France's fine follows Google's introduction in 2012 of a new privacy policy which enables it to track user activity across its services including the search engine, Gmail and YouTube.

The changes make it easier for Google to collect and process data that could be used by advertisers to target individuals, thereby increasing the company's revenue potential.

The CNIL had asked Google to inform web users in France how it processes their personal

data and to define exactly how long they can store the information.

It had also requested that the US giant obtain user permission before storing cookies on their computers, referring to files that track web surfing unbeknownst to the user.

Google has always maintained that its treatment of data gathered from users is in line with European law and has previously refused to address the specific French requirements directly.

In an email, Google France said it had done its best to explain its privacy policies to the CNIL and how they improved service for its users.

The issue of data protection has gathered steam worldwide following revelations by Edward Snowden, a former contractor with the National Security Agency, that the US had a vast, secret programme called PRISM to monitor Internet users.

Google has defended the changes it made on the grounds that they simplify and standardise its approach across its various services.

But critics argue that the policy, which offers no ability to opt out aside from refraining from signing into Google services, gives the operator of the

world's largest search engine unprecedented ability to monitor its users' tastes and purchasing patterns.

Determined to confront the US giant, in late 2012 the national privacy regulators from all EU members ordered Google to comply with EU privacy norms in a concerted action.

Six countries -- France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands -- went a step further in April, actually declaring Google in violation of the law.

Last month, Spain's data protection watchdog ordered Google to pay a 900,000-euro fine for "serious violations" of users' privacy.

YESTERDAY'S Crossword Answer

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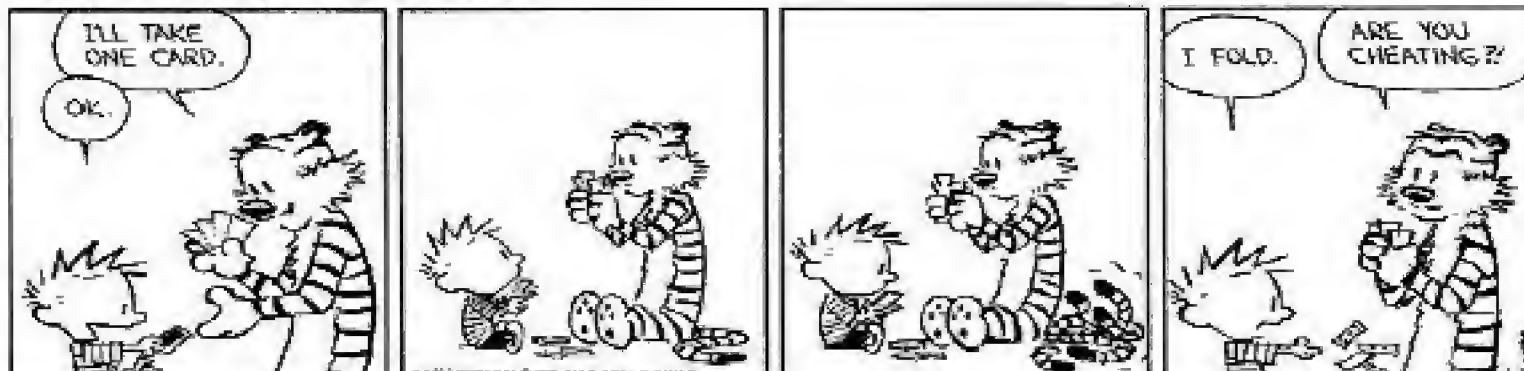
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Main dishes are accompanied by a choice of rice, mixed vegetables rich with garlic, or Naan, plain, buttered, onion or garlic, and you will want to order an extra basket or two of this tasty delight,

on which you can spoon your main course, as well. Poori is crispy fried naan, and most definitely worth the extra two dollars to sample with your meal. Located behind the Royal Plaza Mall, Taj Mahal offers a dining experience that is truly out of the ordinary; they feature an excellent and tasty selection for vegetarians too. If you are a fan of Indian food, or have been toying with trying it, Taj Mahal is the place for a very affordable dining experience and the real deal!

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Football: Qatar World Cup debate gathers pace at FIFA

PARIS (AFP) - The timing of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar brought further trouble for FIFA Wednesday with its number two official ruling out a June-July tournament only to be told by international football's governing body that the matter was still under consideration.

The scheduling of the tournament has been hotly debated ever since FIFA controversially awarded it to Qatar in December 2010, especially over fears that the summer heat in the Gulf emirate would be dangerous for players and fans alike.

"The dates for the World Cup (in Qatar) will not be June-July," Jerome Valcke, the FIFA secretary general and the second most powerful man in international football, told Radio France.

"To be honest, I think it will be held between November 15 and January 15 at the latest.

"If you play between November 15 and the end of December that's the time when the weather conditions are best, when you can play in temperatures equivalent to a warm spring season in Europe, averaging 25 degrees.

However, FIFA reacted swiftly to Valcke's comments by saying they were his personal views and that no formal decision to move the date of the tournament would be taken before this year's World Cup finals in Brazil starting in June.

"Secretary General Jerome Valcke explained today in the Radio France interview -- as he had already mentioned previously -- that in his view the 2022 FIFA World Cup must take place in winter and the best possible time frame would be 15 November to 15 Janu-



ary," said FIFA.

"As the event will not be played until eight years' time the consultation process will not be rushed and will be given the necessary time to consider all of the elements relevant for a decision.

"Consequently, no decision will be taken before the upcoming 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil as agreed by the FIFA executive committee."

Valcke did not say whether he favoured a World Cup in the winter of 2021-22 or 2022-23, but the deciding factor could be the timing of the Winter Olympics in early 2022.

The president of FIFA, Sepp Blatter, has also voiced support for a winter World Cup with a preference for November-December over January-February.

The awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar has been beset by criticism, especially over the searing heat that bakes the Gulf emirate in the summer when the tournament is traditionally held.

Calls had grown increasingly strident to switch it to the winter time to accommodate players and supporters.

But this ran into opposition from European clubs, who would lose their top players for several weeks in the middle of the season and from the Inter-

national Olympic Committee fearful of any competition with the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Qatari World Cup organisers reacted with caution to Valcke's words, saying they would follow whatever directives they received from FIFA.

There was particular anger in England at FIFA giving the 2022 World Cup to Qatar, a country, with little football tradition, while scorning the attempt by England, the sport's birthplace, to host the 2018 edition.

Jim Boyce, a FIFA vice-president from the British controlled province of Northern Ireland, said he was "totally surprised" by Valcke's decision to state what "may have been his personal opinion, even though there had been a widespread belief the 2022 World Cup could not be played in the summer due to the heat.

Football: Mikel upbeat at player of the year chances

ABUJA (AFP) - Nigeria's John Obi Mikel is hoping to be crowned Africa's best player at the Confederation of African Football awards this week, he said on Wednesday.

The Chelsea midfielder is vying for the prestigious award with the Ivorian pair of Yaya Toure, of English Premier League rivals Manchester City, and Didier Drogba, from Turkish club Galatasaray.

The 26-year-old helped Nigeria win a third Africa Cup of Nations in February last year and also qualify for a fifth World Cup finals in November.

He also won a first-ever UEFA Europa League title for his club side.

Rashidi Yekini, Emmanuel Amunke and Victor Ikpeba have previously won the CAF player of the year award but former Arsenal ace Nwankwo Kanu was the last Nigeria star to clinch it in 1999.

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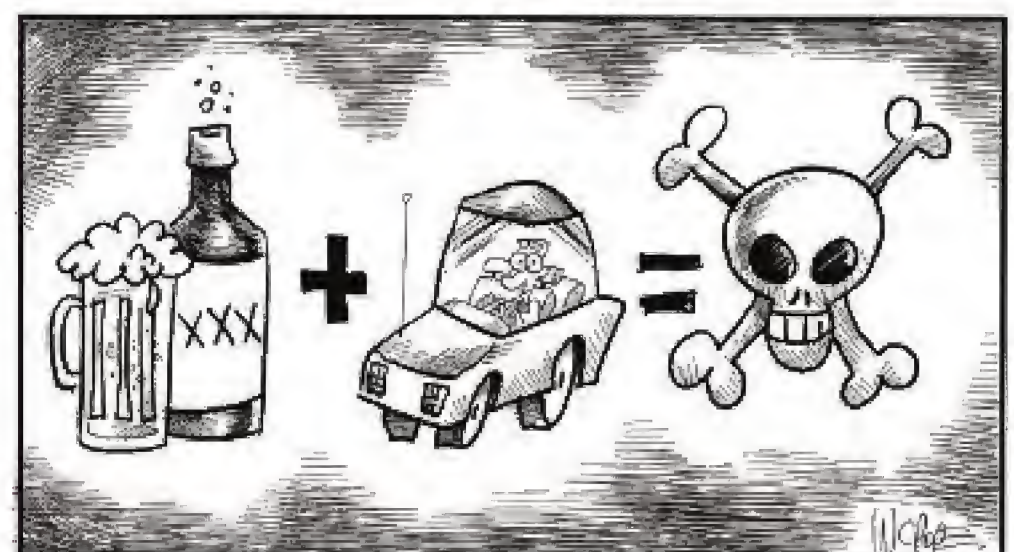
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MANCHESTER (AFP) : West Ham United's English midfielder Stewart Downing (L) vies with Manchester City's French defender Gael Clíchy (R) during the English League Cup semi-final first leg football match between Manchester City and West Ham United at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, northwest England, on Wednesday. Manchester City won 6-0.



BOSTON (AFP) : Meryl Davis and Charlie White practice ahead of the 2014 Prudential U.S. Figure Skating Championships at TD Garden on Thursday in Boston, Massachusetts.



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NFL: Dolphins dump general manager after missing playoffs



MIAMI (AFP) - Jeff Ireland was fired Tuesday as general manager of the Miami Dolphins after the team dropped its final two regular-season games to miss the NFL playoffs.

"After a series of discussions, we both felt that it was in our mutual best interest to part ways," Dolphins owner

Stephen Ross said in a statement. "Jeff was a loyal and dedicated member of the Dolphins and we wish him and his family nothing but the best."

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Don Mattingly and the Los Angeles Dodgers have agreed on a new contract that will keep him as manager of the Major League Baseball club through the 2016 season.

Mattingly and the team had been in talks about an extension for much of the three months since the 2013 campaign concluded, a season in which rumors of Mattingly's ouster became common as the Dodgers struggled through June in last place.

But the Dodgers rallied over the second half of the six-month season and reached the playoffs, advancing to the National League championship series. That ensured Mattingly would return for 2014 thanks to a clause in his contract, but the manager made it clear he did not want to return only as a lame duck with no contract going forward.

Mattingly has gone 260-225 in three seasons with the Dodgers after replacing Joe Torre.

The Dolphins went 8-8 but missed the playoffs for the fifth season in a row, a campaign marred by a harassment scandal involving the treatment of Jonathan Martin by fellow offensive lineman Richie Incognito.

Ireland was made the Dolphins general manager in January of 2008 and took full control of personnel matters and gridiron operations when Bill Parcells stepped aside at the start of the 2010 season.

Under Ireland's tenure, the Dolphins went 46-50 with a playoff loss to the Baltimore Ravens in the 2008 campaign.

"I've spent the last six years with the best organization in football," Ireland said. "Steve and I came to an agreement that the best thing moving forward for all parties would be to part ways."

Grandmaster Jose "Chaco" Cornelio to offer training in Ecuador

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ORANJESTAD - Aruba's Olympic referee, "Chaco" Cornelio has been approached by the Taekwondo Federation of Ecuador to give a course to the national referees of Ecuador. The request from Ecuador is for "Chaco" to give the Ecuadorian referees a course of high level. The course will take place from January 15 to 19, 2014 in Quito, Ecuador. This is an indication of the value that other countries give to Arubans who achieve such high levels in sports. Grandmaster "Chaco" is considered one of the best referees in the world. Certainly, he is in the top 10 in the world. We congratulate "Chaco" for his excellent work and dedication to the sport of Taekwondo, and wish him much success in Quito, Ecuador.



NEW YORK (AFP) - Former Atlanta Braves star pitchers Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine and retired superstar slugger Frank Thomas were elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in voting announced on Wednesday. Maddux and Glavine became the first first-time eligible pitchers elected together since Walter Johnson and Christy Mathewson in the inaugural 1936 class and the first regular starters from the same team's rotation to be elected to the US sporting shrine in the same year since 1946. Maddux won 355 games, eighth-best on the all-time Major League Baseball list, with a 3.16 earned-run average over 23 seasons, including 18 in which he won the Gold Glove for fielding skill. He won four Cy Young Awards in a row as the National League's best pitcher from 1992 through 1995 with the Braves, Chicago Cubs, Los Angeles Dodgers and San Diego. Glavine took two Cy Young awards and won 305 games over 22 seasons. Thomas batted .301 with 521 home runs and 1,704 runs batted in over 19 major league seasons with the Chicago White Sox, Toronto and Oakland. The trio will be enshrined July 27 at Cooperstown, New York, along with three long-time managers - Bobby Cox, Joe Torre and Tony La Russa -- who were named by the expansion era committee last month.

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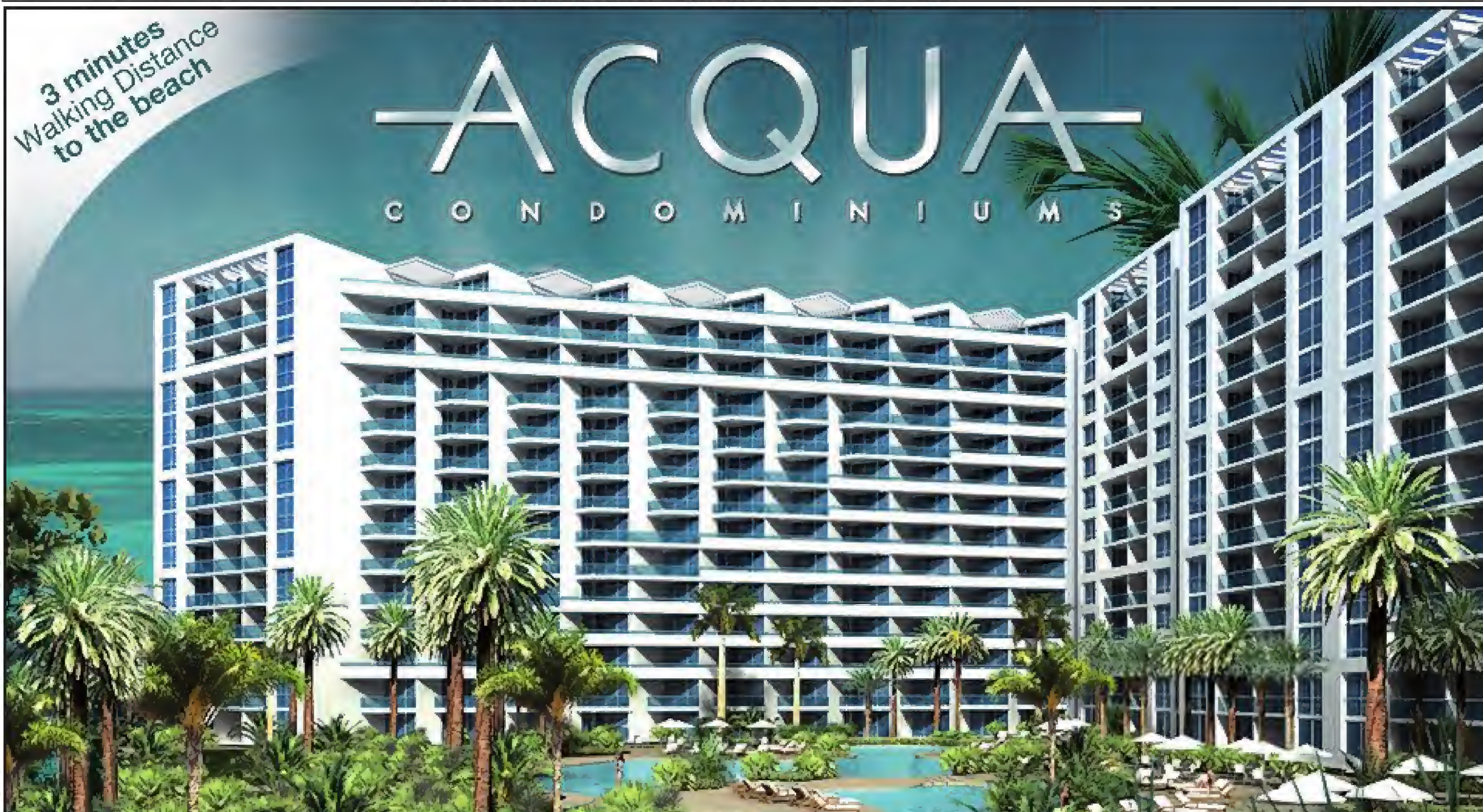
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Skis, speed, signs ruled out as cause of Schumacher accident

ALBERTVILLE (AFP) - Investigators probing Michael Schumacher's accident on Wednesday ruled out faulty skis, inadequate signage and excessive speed as possible causes of his life-threatening off-piste fall in the French Alps.

They said that signs marking the edge of the piste Schumacher skied off just before the accident on December 29 were in line with legal requirements, his rented skis were in perfect condition, and that the Formula One legend had appeared in control of his speed.

The seven-time world champion has been in a medically-induced coma since he fell on an off-piste section between two regular slopes in the ski resort of Meribel and slammed his head on a rock, prompting his evacuation to a hospital in the city of Grenoble.

Investigators are seeking to determine why the accident happened, and whether anyone -- the resort, the ski rental shop, Schumacher himself -- is at fault.

Patrick Quincy, the prosecutor in charge of the probe, told reporters at a press conference that rules determining how to mark the edges of ski slopes in France had been "respected" and that the racing driver had deliberately skied into the off-piste area.

The skis, meanwhile, were "not the cause of the accident" and the bindings were "in good condition", said Stephane Bozon, one of the policemen involved in the probe, following speculation a safety release on Schumacher's skis did not operate properly.

Much has been said about a camera that Schumacher had strapped onto his helmet at the time of the accident, and investigators said they had been able to retrieve the footage and look at it.

Schumacher's manager Sabine Kehm had denied last week that he was skiing fast "because it appears he helped a friend who had just fallen".

Quincy said the footage on the camera lasted only two minutes, but that the racer cannot be seen helping anyone.

Renze Postma and Chester Hill participates in Pan American 2014 Cup games

ORANJESTAD - Last weekend two athletes of the triathlon sport, namely, Chester Hill and Renze Postma, together with head coach of Aruba's Triathlon, Nicolaas Robert, left for Chile. These two athletes will be competing in the Vina del Mar Triathlon Pan American 2014 Cup.

On Saturday the sprint distance took place, while on Sunday was the Olympic distance. Athlete Chester Hill participated in the Sprint Distance



ITU Junior. Here he achieved 8th place overall with a time of 1.11.36 and in the 6th place in his age category 16-18 years.

Renze Postma participated in the Olympic Distance for the first time in the ITU Elite Men. Postmas was the only athlete under 20 years of age, he is 17 years old, to become 18 in September. Despite the less favorable conditions, he finished in the 18th place with a time of 2.10.07. The athletes had to swim in extremely cold water, which Postma is not

used to in Aruba. The delegation is very pleased with their performance in Chile.

The Subsidy Commission of the Lotto pa Deporte Foundation is very pleased to see the progress of our athletes.

Hence, the reason for their continued financial support so that our athletes can participate in renown international competitions such as the Vina Del Mar PATCO Triathlon. The Commission congratulates our athletes Hill and Postma for their performance in Chile.

